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The Pacification of South Viet Nam

IN September 1974 the Saigon press announced William E. Colby's arrival in Saigon for his seventh visit since his appointment as head of the CIA.

Who is Colby and why is he so interested in South Viet Nam?

Born in 1920, Colby started working for the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) which later became the CIA, at the age of 23 as an intelligence lieutenant. Having served in Europe during the Second World War, after demobilization he returned to the lawyers' firm of Donovan, the former chief of the OSS. Then, when the CIA was founded in 1947, he became one of its most active employees. In 1950, the US began its intervention in Viet Nam, giving increasing aid to the French colonialists in their war against the Vietnamese people, and Colby was ordered to make a thorough study of the problems of Southeast Asia. He researched deeply into the history, civilization, habits and customs of the Indochinese peoples; he learned the Vietnamese language until he could speak and write it fluently. In 1959, he was appointed a political officer, then First Secretary of the US Embassy in Saigon; as such, he established relations with members of the opposition as well as numerous pro-government personalities. Returning to Washington for some time, he was again offered a diplomatic post in Saigon after Tet 1968 and Nixon, who had been elected President of the USA, named him deputy to Ellsworth Bunker, with the rank of ambassador. He combined this with the directorship of CORDS (Civil Operations and Rural Development Support), the service in charge of pacification, after the

departure of Robert Komer in February 1969. In June 1971, Colby was recalled to Washington and appointed Director of the Operations Division of the CIA — that branch whose worldwide anti-revolutionary plottings had given the CIA such a bad reputation. Following the best traditions of the CIA, the director of "operations" will eventually become director of the CIA, as was the case of Allen Dulles, Richard Helms... Colby's promo-

tion took place in May 1973 when James Schlesinger, then director of the CIA, was promoted to the job of Defense Secretary.

This brief biography shows the extent of the present chief of the CIA's involvement in Viet Nam during almost all his career. Thus the important role played by this organisation in the war, particularly in the so-called pacification operations, should not surprise anyone.

The Pacification Theory

PACIFICATION has at all times been carried out by the invaders against the people who are victims of their aggression. It was vigorously conducted by the French colonialists during the 1950s when they succeeded in taking control of parts of Viet Nam's territory.

Having replaced the French in South Viet Nam, the American imperialists also paid great attention to pacification, considered as absolutely indispensable to cope with a war of resistance waged by the entire people. The scope of US pacification activities is clearly shown by the huge economic and technical potentials at the disposal of the US in their neo-colonialist enterprises in South Viet Nam.

Under Ngo Dinh Diem, pacification was carried through by establishing "strategic hamlets". According to the Staley-Taylor plan this should have been accomplished within 18 months. Yet the "strategic hamlets" — actually concentration camps — were unable to check the revolutionary tide. Then the US Expeditionary Corps was brought

to South Viet Nam. US troops were to "search and destroy" the "Viet Cong" regular forces, whereas puppet troops, with US support, were given the task of "pacification", baptized the "other war" aimed at "winning the heart and mind" of the population.

The whole theory of pacification underwent a complete revision with the coming to power of Nixon who appointed an Englishman, Sir Robert Thompson, notorious for his deeds in Malaysia, as his special adviser.

In Nixon's strategy, pacification was far more important even than military operations. The question, as always, was "to drain the pond and catch the fish." But, instead of hitting directly at the guerilla fighter, Thompson advised striking rather at those who maintained the guerilla, who were in liaison with him, protected him and helped him carry out his activities. For, as Thompson said, if we wipe out a guerilla, another will appear, but if we wipe out a revolutionary base, the guerilla war will be extinguished. According to Thompson, Johnson did not understand